

11/06/05

***HCC TESTIMONY FOR PRESENTATION TO USDA 2007
FARM BILL "LISTENING SESSION" – NOV 12, 2005***

Good Morning. I am Jim Greenwell, President of the statewide Hawaii Cattlemen's Council.

Approximately one million of our state's 4.2 million acres are in some form of grazing use and much of this land has been in cattle ranching for over a century.

The economic, logistical and regulatory challenges of ranching in Hawaii are at least as great here as anywhere in the U.S.. Furthermore, the real estate value of much of this underlying land has appreciated exponentially.

Nevertheless, most of our ranchers and landowners are not prepared to quit or cash out. They are deeply committed to continue managing and caring for their land not just as an irreplaceable long term working resource but also as a critical component of Hawaii's broader ecosystem.

Farm Bill programs have been a tremendous aid and catalyst to Hawaii's ranchers encouraging and rewarding good management and conservation practices.

Specifically we offer three comments;

1. We urge shifting more Farm Bill funding to conservation and stewardship programs for our working agricultural lands so we can do even more with such excellent programs as WHIP, EQIP, CRP, GRP and hopefully if we can soon get it established in Hawaii, CREP;

2. In Hawaii, much of the land ripe for increased investment of "conservation dollars" is held by relatively few larger landowners. We urge a review of ways to amend the \$2.5M AGI cap without jeopardizing the smaller rancher's and farmer's priority to significant portions of that funding; and

3. As for the Endangered Species Act, we support the current efforts in Congress to amend it to insure that it more fairly regulates without unduly frustrating the efforts of either the private landowners or the Government agencies that implement Farm Bill programs such as FSA and NRCS to best use and manage for a reasonable balance of economic and conservation benefits.

Thank you for coming to Hawaii to hear us.